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# The Model Marion and I

## Clayton Adams

This impulse to rebuild. To re-construct, panel by panel, roof by roof. Cutting windows from cardboard to peer a ghostly gaze into the past- sills of ink. My miniature domicile, the dwelling place of my former life. Glue is my mortar, cementing paper stone block walls like the rigid memories stuck in my mind. This town and its streets are fragile materials, vulnerable to destruction, just like the place I once laughed and cried. I laughed at frivolous things then, a puppy dodging a child in chase. My children cried innocent tears drawn from skinned knees, stubbed toes, from not getting their way. Laughter and tears seem as distant as my vision. The loss of place.

This town is different from my town. Its likeness is as haunting as its empty streets. Its uninhabited silence is deafening. No whispering or clamorous voices resonate off these weak walls. The smell of paper, ink, and glue is not like the smell of food and fire smoke. Scents of home, of people young and old, do not shift with the wind in this contrivance. My daydream stare materializes the street vendor, the place where I bought a pastry of nut and honey, its sweetness flooding my mouth with saliva. I can only sit silent from afar and watch the invisible creatures bustling, strolling, busy in their activities. I trace the path I walked a thousand times to our house. I look into our kitchen window, now a square cut in the fabricated wall. There's my wife, dancing the culinary dance, the prelude to our family meal. The waft of bread draws the children to the table. Why can I not join them? The vision escapes me, leaves me abandoned and empty as the microcosm of memory. This model of life before, the life I once knew. Paper, ink, and glue.

The children sit gazing the puppet. She stands a meter tall, her wooden limbs limited in their movement. Her facial likeness is not far from my wife's; the sparkling eyed children not far in likeness from my own children. I call her Marion. She is my wife; she is my child's mother. She takes her first step and stops. I gently angle the stick. I can see my wife, the way she shifted her weight to her left leg, subtly contorting her posture. She turns to her right and slowly walks a few steps, stops, turns her head toward the wide-eyed children that crowd the platform. Marion approaches one little girl, who leans forward in amazement. I animate the doll with all my inner strength. My emotions pour down the strings like tears, dripping life into the doll. Marion stops centimeters from the girl, leans slightly forward, and spreads her wooden arms like a bird in flight. I feel the child's embrace in the tips of my fingers, saturating the lifeless limbs and pinions with love that travels up the strings into the depths of my want. Marion is my wife, the mother of my children, the mother of motherless children in the camp. Once a wooden doll, her core becomes soft. Her flesh does not feel like the children she once felt. But for a moment her strings become lifeless, tying hearts and memories together. We give her life, the children and I. We are the puppeteers.

In this camp, even those who lived in my town are now strangers in a strange land--- alive, but lifeless. Time slothfully climbs further away from the ground. Then he loses grip, falls heavily to the ground only to begin the climb again. The only things one can grasp are the dissipating memories of what once was, and will never be again. There are others like me, each with similar stories, with memories that flash into their minds like warm sunlight. We have survived the inexplicable slaughter, but part of us died there. Here, I can only reconstruct my memories with fragile materials- wood, paper, ink, and glue. I can build portals from erasure to my losses. Sometimes I force myself into flashing visions of home. I create the blurred image of my town. In my dream, I control the outcome like a puppet-master. In my dream, I am my home when the shell explodes. Then, I join my wife and children in dreamless sleep.